

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 007

SP 022 867

AUTHOR L. Ars, Nora M.
 TITLE Teachers in American Schools Abroad: Four Case Studies.
 PUB DATE 13 Jul 83
 NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15, 1983).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - General (140)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment); Case Studies; *Foreign Countries; *Foreign Nationals; Locus of Control; *Overseas Employment; Self Concept; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Background; *Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This study reports on the findings of a questionnaire administered to teachers in American schools abroad in Guatemala, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Data is reported in case study format for both a male and female teacher in Guatemala and the Netherlands. Special attention has been devoted to the analysis of the lives of American teachers as "third culture people" distinguished as a category by high mobility and advanced skill or education. Teachers' perceptions and characterizations of themselves in the new environment were determined by the questionnaire which included measurements for locus of control, normlessness, self-esteem, and instrumental (short-term) and terminal (long-term) values. The study found that most subjects were well adjusted to their living situation, but that did not depend on knowing the country's language. More interaction took place with host nationals in European countries than in South American countries. The locus of control is more often externally oriented for both female and male subjects. And terminal as well as instrumental values differ greatly between males and females. (JMK)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED233007

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Nora M. Evers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TEACHERS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS ABROAD: FOUR CASE STUDIES

A paper prepared by Nora M. Evers for presentation at the
International Conference on Education for Teaching, 30th
Anniversary World Assembly, Washington, D.C., July 13, 1983.

Dr. Nora M. Evers, Chair
Department of Education
Kalamazoo College
Kalamazoo
Michigan 49007

SP 022 867

TEACHERS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS ABROAD: FOUR CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The focus of this paper rests on American teachers who live in a country other than their own while working in a school system. The particular and special problems and opportunities that their diverse cultural experiences present is crystalized specifically in the close examination of case studies. For some, their "sojourn" was just for a couple of years; for others a major part of their lives as it was spent in one or another foreign environment. Only lately research in this area has begun to address some of these people and their specific problems and to explore the dimension. Positive as well as negative aspects arise when discussing a cross-cultural experience. Werkman (1977), for instance, author and psychologist in the area of cross-cultural experiences, relates that "What you gain from an experience abroad is going to be maintained, but it is better to tuck it away. What you have learned not only doesn't get you anywhere but it tends to threaten or irritate other people." Third culture people, who are returning to the United States, express this feeling in terms of sharing experiences in their process of adaptation. The impact that these feelings might have on "developing support transactions" or in the "transposing of one's identity" during the adaptation or re-entry experience might change the process for a third culture teacher returning home. Third culture teachers occur repeated experiences of separation and loss, the hazards of transition and confrontations with normal patterns of behavior. Such challenges can contribute to the overall development and understanding of themselves. Although the effects of geographic mobility on psychological processes are of increasing prevalence and of importance to the contemporary world, little has been written about it.

It is important to know about this specific third culture life style in the individual context as well as the societal context since each year brings more geographic mobility to a greater number of people. A competence in making transitions seems to be a critical component in our growingly interdependent world. The pattern of mobility and cross-cultural experiences of third culture people in a world of increasing opportunities for persons to be mobile and to communicate across cultures is intrinsically interesting. The experiences and perceptual frames of reference of third culture people have certain

characteristics from which we can learn about the modern way of life; the transition to the mobile life style, the opportunities as well as the challenges that are presented in an ever-changing world. Teachers, as a professional group of people who in this case are interested in a global life style which calls for easy transformations to fit into a variety of situations need to develop adaptive mechanisms. The greater their competence and expertise in these adaptive mechanisms, the greater the chance for successful survival in their work in the modern world. The sojourn, that is the stay or trip overseas, has in a sense become a symbol of the modern way of living which often means to be cut off from roots, and unsure future direction, and in a sense it carries the idea of being a tourist or a nomad, or even a stranger in a strange land (Jordan, 1981). Our post modern society that is global in nature demands certain expertise in its on going "becoming" process. Since the process is global, the expertise in implementing and managing the process calls for societal mediators. In other words, those people that are called third culture people can also be called mediators. In fact, Useem (1963) states that these mediators are reflective of the growing interdependence, both conflictive and cooperative, for more than 4 billion inhabitants of the globe. This means the handful of people which can be mediators that are abroad, live outside their own nation state, often act as mediators between their own nation state and the one they are living in overseas. These can be teachers, as are studied in this paper, but also can include missionaries, diplomats and military personnel, artists in oil-riggers, United Nations diplomats, and bi-lingual stenographers, reporters and bankers, translators and technical consultants, scholars and multi-national corporation executives; they are distinguished as a category by their high mobility which means that they change their residence every one to four years, they are also distinguished by their advanced skill or education, and the last point, but an important one, their sponsorship in their mediation role.

Quite independent of their role in relation to the sponsor, and this means that for instance a teacher has as a sponsor the overseas school and the role then in relation to the sponsor is that of being a teacher, quite independent of this role from their relation to the sponsor is the person they are, the self they develop and project. The richness of their individual experiences transcends their country of origins, external appearances, ethnic backgrounds, or even passport designation. These people are important in consideration not only in their professional role, but also in their personal image which they project in the foreign country. Approximately one third of them marry a spouse of a different national, racial, or cultural background (Jordan, 1981).

Since World War II, increasing numbers of people have become involved cross-nationally for the purpose of relating segments

of society to each other to provide mediation between cultures. The concept of "third culture" grew out of studies of Americans in India participating in various missionary, business, diplomatic, or other aid programs and the third culture problems and opportunities that arose from the binational interactions of persons from western and eastern experiences. Useem (1963) again defines it as follows, "That segment of the world encompassing third culture called bi-national third culture is defined as the complex of patterns learned and shared by communities of people stemming from both a western and nonwestern society who regularly interact as they relate their societies, or sections thereof, in the physical setting of nonwestern society." The increase of interest, activity, and interdependence among those seeking interpersonal, international context created a need for fundamental knowledge about the nature of involving commonalities and conflicts, the interrelationships among persons involved and the kinds of social and individual self that has been developed by people within this context. More and more minor dependents have joined adult members of the family into this world of interdependence, world organizations, or military bases. These persons, according to Useem (1967), who find themselves living overseas in certain specific sponsor roles such as business, federal, civilian, military, missionary, or other categories where they assumed to be a representative rather than solely in an individual role, have been defined by researchers as third culture persons.

Other terms that have been used throughout literature in regard to third culture people include "ex-patriots." Cohen (1977) talks about ex-patriots as those voluntary, temporary migrants, mostly from affluent societies, who reside abroad for one or several of the following purposes: business, missionary, teaching, research, culture and leisure. Ex-patriots is a loose or fuzzy term and it sometimes captures on the one hand tourists and on the other hand the semi-permanent or permanent migrants. This term probably embraces most types of people who are sometimes called "transnational participants" or "overseas Americans."

There exists a variety of American schools abroad. One report in 1968 (Jordan, 1981), identifies 600 American schools while in 1975, another report, counted approximately 700 schools in more than 110 countries. In reviewing the types of schools available to the dependents of overseas Americans, we can find several categories:

1. Those assisted and maintained by the Department of Defense (DOD),
2. Those overseas schools (A/S) assisted by the Departments of State,
3. Embassy schools,

4. Those established and maintained by religious groups,
5. Those which are business or company related,
6. Those schools which are proprietary or entrepreneurial.

The teachers that were subjects for this particular study all were employed by an American school that is partly assisted by the offices of overseas schools. Tuition is usually charged to the students and all have an American curriculum with English as the main language of communication.

The presented study is essentially descriptive and exploratory. The paucity of hard data on third culture people has not yet permitted the development of sophisticated hypothesis or exact survey instrument. In an article on third culture students Useem (1979) discussed a need for ordered summaries so that the significance of the third culture experience can be determined and understood. According to Useem, these summaries "illustrate one of the meanings of culture--summaries of experiences are valued which are learned and shared and passed to the next generation. . .which give meaning to personal, unique experiences." For this study it was decided upon a case study approach since the experimental study of a single subject is a method particularly suited for the researcher as a model of investigation that can later be applied to the study of a system such as a classroom, family, or community. Therefore, for the purpose of this presentation, a male and female teacher were selected from two of the four schools under study (Belgium, Netherlands, Guatemala, Mexico) and comparisons are made between teachers in South American and Northern Europe, as well as between male-female responses.

Case Studies

Our first two case studies are a male and female teacher from the American School in Guatemala. Our female teacher is Kim and she is 26 years old. She grew up in New York, although both parents were originally from Canada. Kim is the oldest child in the family; she also has a sister and two brothers. She was reared in a Lutheran religion, but became Roman Catholic later in life. Kim went to a small private school in New York where she graduated in 1978 with an Art/Education Major and a Spanish minor. During the time she studied, she had opportunities to see the world. First, she spent some time in Germany where she worked in a Girl Scout camp and later that year she also went to Spain to study at a university through an opportunity as the "Junior Year Abroad Program." Right after graduation Kim first took a nonteaching job as a social security administrator. She only did this for a year because soon she found a teaching position at a

preparatory school. She became unemployed then, but still moved to Guatemala when she was offered a job.

When Kim learned about her move to Guatemala she tried to prepare herself by talking to as many people as possible who had experiences in this country. Of course, her ability to speak Spanish aided her very much. Kim didn't encounter a culture shock, yet felt a certain degree of rootlessness after her move to the new country. It can be observed from the literature on cross-culture experiences that some sense of rootlessness will stay with third culture people for the rest of their lives. In fact, this rootlessness serves sometimes as the drive to make new moves every four years or so.

The political situation in Guatemala, of course, influences the life styles of teachers in this area. Many teachers expressed an anxiety around the insecurity of their living situations. Kim is uncertain about her plans for next year since this will depend on the political situation in the country. When Kim was asked to define herself politically she did not care to answer this question. This might come out of precaution not to become involved in political expressions. Kim did mention that she felt removed from dangerous and violent situation and experiences taking place in Guatemala and indicated that she felt socially at home with the Americans but not with the Guatemalans. One of the measurements in the questionnaire that respondents filled out measured locus of control. The locus of control indicates if the person is motivated by the self or, on the other hand, by external, outside forces. It can, therefore, sometimes be called internal versus external locus of control. When discussing Kim's locus of control, it can be noted that she scored totally on external control. When comparisons were made with male respondents in the study, it was found that the women in our population score higher consistently on external locus of control than the male respondents.

Another measure in this study was called normlessness; in other words, if scoring high on the normlessness scale one tends to feel that there are no observable norms or guiding forces in one's environment. It was felt that this was an important measure for third culture people because after a recent move to another environment, one may encounter a sense of rootlessness and normlessness in a new living place. Of the nine items in this index, Kim scored on five that she indeed felt a sense of normlessness; this was exactly the same for the male respondent in our study. In other words, one may conclude from this that there is certainly a sense of normlessness going on when one is to move to an unknown environment.

The next measure, self esteem, indicated that in general the subjects of the study felt good about themselves. Females

as well as males scored generally high on the self esteem measure.

The last two measures in the instrument viewed the terminal values in contrast to instrumental values that are important in Kim's life. Terminal values are of course those guiding principals that one needs and thinks as important as an end state in one's life and strives toward accomplishing these. The instrumental values, on the other hand, are important for the person right now - an influenced behavior or mode of conduct. As terminal values, Kim found that "true friendship" is most important to her. "True friendship" together with "inner harmony" were those values that Kim regards at this point in her life as something she will be striving toward. Least important are for her "equality" and "national security." It is interesting to note here that the male respondent of our study also scored "equality" as least important and found "national security" only somewhat important. The instrumental values that are guiding Kim into certain behaviors in her life are "loving," "being responsible," and "being honest." On the other hand, most important for both male and female was to be "ambitious," and to be "obedient." It may be concluded that the only measure on which our female respondent differs greatly from our male respondent is the locus of control. On all other measurements, the female scored about the same as our male respondent.

The male teacher who was part of our study in Guatemala will be called Jay who is 41 years old. Jay originally came to Guatemala from Wisconsin, but has a very international background. Jay has taught at the American School in Kuwait, an English Language Center in Japan, in an international school in Iran, and has finally spent the last two years in the American School in Guatemala. Jay's father's birth place was Iowa and mother's birth place was Illinois. Jay is studying Spanish at the moment, but speaks in addition to English, Japanese. While teaching at the Guatemala school, he lives with a family there; Jay is not married at the moment and has no children. In regard to formal education, Jay possesses a master's degree and did graduate work in history as well as education and is certified to teach social studies and history. He was reared in the Methodist religion as a first born, but not only child, who has one sister. During the period that Jay has lived outside the United States, his health has been overall very good, although he explained that in Japan he was hospitalized for two weeks of pneumonia. When asked about future plans, Jay indicates that he will probably stay another year in Guatemala if indeed an offer will be made to him and he indicates congruently that he feels good about his work at his school and as if he is accomplishing indeed something there.

In regard to homesickness, Jay has indicated that he does miss his mother and in order to deal with this feeling he writes or sends tapes home regularly. Jay has not noticed a severe culture shock yet expresses concern about the dangerous living situation in Guatemala; for example, his house was bombed and Jay feels that the situation is even going to get worse. He does feel that the United States should help Guatemala economically. Jay does spend his vacations in Guatemala to visit as many different places as possible.

In regard to the locus of control of Jay it can be noted that Jay's scores are divided between being externally as well as internally oriented. In terms of normlessness, Jay indicates a certain amount of normlessness yet his scoring on this measure is not extremely high. It may be expected that Jay has experienced a variety of other cultural settings and knows probably how to orientate himself somewhat in the new environment.

The next measure, self esteem, indicated that Jay feels good about himself. Although he did not score extremely high on this measure, Jay certainly indicated a certain respect for himself. Compared to our female teacher in Guatemala, Jay scored somewhat lower on the self esteem measure than Kim. The last two measures indicated that in terms of terminal values, Jay rates "contentness" or "happiness" as being the most important principal in his life. Also, a pleasurable and enjoyable life, as well as an exciting life possibly with sexual and spiritual intimacy are all rated as important in his life. On the other hand, "equality," "beauty of nature and art," and "inner harmony" are not considered important for Jay. In terms of instrumental values that may guide his behavior daily, it may be noted that Jay considers "being responsible," "honest," and "broad-minded" as the three most important values. "Being forgiven," "ambitious," and "imaginative or creative" do not seem to play an important part in Jay's life.

To contrast these two case studies of Guatemala, two case studies of the Netherlands will be presented. The teacher in the Netherlands, called Kathy, is 41 and considers California as her home. Her mother was raised in Canada and her father in the United States. Kathy has been reared in a Protestant family and was the second born in her family with a sister and three brothers. Kathy is momentarily married, but was widowed once. She has one daughter and two step-children who are living with her. Kathy speaks a variety of languages: English, Spanish, and French, but she does not speak Dutch. She has been at the American School for almost two years and is planning to stay there longer. Kathy has a master's degree in Biology and has worked in a variety of settings, teaching as well as nonteaching jobs, mainly in California and Michigan, previous to her move to the Netherlands. She really enjoys her work at the school, and actually the only thing that she misses is more sunshine and warmer weather. In order to deal with these feelings, she responds that she will turn on her electric blanket and will wear an extra sweater. When Kathy was asked to identify three

important in her life, she responded that these were her father, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Lindburg.

Kathy interacts on many occasions with host nationals, although she does not speak the Dutch language. It has been found that interaction with host national is much easier in European countries, especially in Northern European settings, as it is in South American countries and especially for women. Women teachers tend to interact only among each other in American schools in South America while it is much more prevalent for women teachers in American schools in Northern Europe to have a variety of support systems outside their work place.

When Kathy's locus of control was considered, it was found that she is externally motivated rather than internally, which was congruent with the overall finding of the study. It was interesting to note that Kathy felt this new environment to have norms and she felt much at home with these norms guiding her every day behavior. There was no sense of normlessness for her at all, although our male teacher with which we counteracted Kathy's responses, experienced a considerable amount of normlessness in the new country.

In regard to self esteem, Kathy scored very high, which again is congruent with the other self esteem scores for cross-cultural experienced people in this population. Important terminal values for Kathy were "freedom," "peace," and "harmony." Least important terminal values were "salvation," "social recognition," and "friendship." It is also interesting to note here that although Kathy found friendship not especially important in her life, our male respondent found friendship as very important in his life. For instrumental values, Kathy found "honesty," "independence," and "cheerfulness" to be most important, but on the other hand, she ranked be "forgiven," "obedient," and "polite" for least important values in her life at this moment. These instrumental values were somewhat the same for Kathy as our male respondent.

Let's now take a look at the male respondent in the Netherlands. Paul is a 30 year old teacher who speaks little Dutch and Spanish in addition to English and has been in the Netherlands for approximately three years. His father came from South Dakota and his mother from Indiana and raised Paul in a Presbyterian environment. However, Paul indicates that he has at the moment no religious preference. Paul has two older sisters and is at present single. He indicates that he has never experienced any major illness or accidents while living overseas. When asked about future plans, Paul indicated to us that he is looking forward to continuing his employment at the school in the Netherlands, yet changing to teaching at another grade level. It was interesting to note that Paul feels somewhat frustrated by the sub-culture as he experiences Americans living abroad. He felt that living within a sub-culture limited his scope and opportunities. From questions in the survey, it may be concluded that Paul has few host national friends, although he does speak Dutch and is only

on few occasions involved in local activities. Paul has defined himself politically as a conservative radical, who feels that the United States does not understand the needs and view of Europeans. In regard to the locus of control, it can be concluded that Paul is somewhat more internally than externally oriented, however, the differences are very small. In regard to normlessness, Paul does not indicate that he feels normless and rates himself very high in terms of self-esteem.

When taking a look at the terminal values, it was found that Paul rates "mature love," which includes sexual and spiritual intimacy, as very important in his life. Next to "mature love," "true friendship and self-respect and self-esteem" were most important values in Paul's life. On the other hand, Paul rates "salvation," "national security," and "wisdom" as least important. It is interesting to note here that our female teacher rated "wisdom" and "family security" as very important. Also, at the scale for instrumental values it was found that Paul ranked "broad-mindedness," "independence," and "loving" as three important values in his day to day life. All of these seem to be related to his terminal values. On the other hand, being "obedient," "ambitious," and "clean" were not ranked as very important in Paul's life. In general, it can be concluded that there is a large discrepancy overall between the male and female responses that were in the measurements of terminal and instrumental values.

Conclusion

This research has investigated the lives of teachers in Guatemala, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Belgium. The general purpose was to come to a better understanding of particulars in the lives of third culture people. Measurements of locus of control, normlessness, self-esteem, and instrumental and terminal values rated how these third culture people's perception and characterizations of themselves in the new environment were. The data of this study were collected by means of a questionnaire that was administered in the American schools abroad. Information was processed in such a way that case studies evolved out of the findings in order to give an illustration to the summaries of experiences of third culture people as shared and passed to others. The subject of this study is labeled third culture people in the sense that they are spending most of their lives outside the United States. They are highly mobile, they have advanced skills or education, and have a sponsor in their role as a mediator. Mediator, that is, when they assumed to be representatives rather than solely having an individual role, and these mediators are standing between and among various cultures.

The main findings of this study were:

1. Overall, most subjects were well adjusted to their new living situation, but adjustment did not depend on knowing their host national language.

2. There was a lot more interaction with host nationals in European countries than in South American countries.
3. The locus of control is more often externally oriented for female subjects as it is for male subjects.
4. Terminal as well as instrumental values differ greatly between male and female.

When a greater understanding of third culture people who are able to move into any cultural situation and life style has been accomplished, it is hoped that expertise may be gained in developing our adaptive mechanisms for fast and easy transformation in an ever increasing mobile world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cohen, E. Ex-Patriot Communities. Current Sociology, 24, 3, 1977.
- Evers, E. M. Foreign Teen-Aged Exchange Students in America: Relationships with Families, Peers, and Schools. Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1979.
- Jordan, K. F. The Adaptation Process of Third Culture Dependent Youth as They Re-Enter the United States and Enter College. Unpublished dissertation, Michigan State University, 1981.
- Useem, J., Useem, R.H., and Donoghue, J. Men in the Middle of the Third Culture, The Roles of Americans and Nonwestern Peoples in Cross-Cultural Administration. Uman Organization, 22, 3, 169-179, 1963.
- Useem, R.H. The Student Third Culture. Paper presented at the 20th Anniversary Membership Conference of the International Education Exchange in New York City New York, 1967.
- Werkman, S. Bringing Up Children Overseas: A Guide for Families. U.S.A.: Basic Books, 1977.